CHURCH NEWS

FROM THE NORTHERN COUNTRIES

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Edited by
THE NORTHERN ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE
Sigtuna, Sweden

Director: Dr. HARRY JOHANSSON, Sigtuna, Sweden
Editor: Rev. JOHS. LANGHOFF, Øster Egesborg per Mern, Denmark

No. 75 October 26th, 1961.

DENMARK

The Church and the Aid to the Developing Countries.

In the Danish Parliament the Prime Minister, Mr. Kampmann, at present Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, has proposed the setting up of a Council for technical co-operation with the developing countries, for the purpose of planning and effectuating the Danish aid to the developing countries. The Minister of Foreign Affairs will appoint the members and the chairman of the Council. Members will be partly persons recommended by authorities, institutions, and organizations particularly interested in the developing countries, partly various experts. A Board of 12 - 15 members, set up by the Council and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, will direct the Council and the work, and a secretariate and an institute for matters pertaining to developing countries is to be established. The Board shall also prepare collections of money to be used for the aid to the developing countries.

An annual grant towards these activities will be included in the budget and it is hoped that, in the course of some years, it will reach an amount equalling to 1 o/o of the national income or 400 to 500 million Danish Crowns. At the same time an annual State guarantee of up to 250 million Danish Crowns against loss on private credits to the developing countries was proposed.

In answer to the objections by Church quarters to the fact that Foreign Mission experts were not included in the temporary committee set up by the Government (see CN No. 74), promises have now been given that the Foreign Missions will be represented in the coming Council for assistance to the developing countries. It is obvious, however, that the Council will not have any particular practical importance as it will probably meet rather seldom, and Church circles are therefore waiting with keen interest to see whether the Foreign Missions will also be represented on the Board which will have the final word in all decisions about the work.

So far the missionary societies have not yet finally decided whether to accept contributions from the State towards their humanitarian enterprises, but they seem increasingly disinclined to do so. The fact that the aid to developing countries has been put in charge of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been interpreted by many people to mean that this aid will become politically biased and that the Missions should consequently decline the offer to administer funds from this source.

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An annual grant towards these activities will be included in the budget and it is hoped that, in the course of some years, it will reach an amount equalling to 1 o/o of the national income or 100 to 200 million Danish Crowns. At the same time an annual State guarantee of up to 250 million Danish Crowns against loss on private credits to the developing countries was proposed.

In answer to the objections by Church quarters to the fact that Foreign Mission experts were not included in the temporary committee set up by the Government (see CN No. 71), promises have now been given that the Foreign Missions will be represented in the coming Council for assistance to the developing countries. It is obvious, however, that the Council will not have any particular practical importance as it will probably meet rather seldom, and Church circles are therefore watching with keen interest to see whether the Foreign Missions will also be represented on the Board which will have the final word in all decisions about the work.

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ev. Johs. Krohn on Relief in Bengal.

In a report, published by the "Kristeligt Dagblad", the leader of he great relief work of the World Council of Churches among refugees n Bengal, Rev. Johs. Krohn, Rural Dean, has told about the results f the work up to now and the plans for the future.

Good contacts have been obtained with the local authorities and he Government, Mr. Krohn says, and the local population and the re- ugees alike have expressed their appreciation of the work. A mobile oad-side clinic has been established, and orders have been given for he erection of three houses so as to demonstrate to the refugees what an be done with the building material placed at their disposal by the overnment. A sports club and a social club have also been started. he work, which is centred around Calcutta and Dandakaranya, may be ivided into three sections: a social welfare programme, an economic econstruction programme and a medical programme. So far the work as reached only the preliminary stage, but Rev. J. Krohn has outlined a number of problems to be tackled in various spheres, and stresses he aim of the relief as being "a help to self-help".

reater Fellowship in Missionary Work Desirable.

Mr. Johs. Aagaard, University Lecturer at Aarhus, in an article in the newly published Annual Report of the Danish Missionary Society, advocates a simplification of the organization of the Danish Foreign Mission work. There are in Denmark 17 different bodies sending out missionaries, he says, 11 of which belong to the Danish Lutheran National Church and 2 are connected with it, and work is done in at least 24 different places all over the world, although only 6 million Danish Crowns annually and 300 missionaries are available. Besides the missionary societies proper, there are a number of organizations in support of Foreign Missions, all of them publishing their own mission paper.

Much money and labour is wasted on account of this scattered effort Mr. Aagaard writes, and it seems an obvious conclusion that we should strive for closer co-operation and fellowship, a fellowship, that is, in which differences and special character traits are preserved.

FINLAND

Dr. Karl-Erik Forssell Bishop of Borgå (Porvoo).

The President of Finland has appointed the former rector of the Swedish congregation in Åbo (Turku) and member of the cathedral chapter, Dr. Karl-Erik Forssell, to be the Bishop of the Diocese of Borgå (Porvoo) in succession to the late Bishop Dr. G.O. Rosenqvist.

Contact Meeting between the Press and the Free Churches.

The Swedish Free Church Joint Committee in Finland conducted a contact meeting between representatives of the Press and the Free Churches in Helsinki (Helsingfors). Four introductory lectures on the principles and practical endeavours of the two parties were followed by animated discussions. Summarizing the discussions in conclusion, Rev. Sergei Dubrovin said that the Free Churches needed an information service similar to that of the Lutheran National Church.

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In a report, published by the "Ostasiatisk Dagblad", the leader of the great relief work of the World Council of Churches among refugees in Bengal, Rev. John. Kronn, Rural Dean, has told about the results of the work up to now and the plans for the future.

Good contacts have been obtained with the local authorities and the Government, Mr. Kronn says, and the local population and the refugees alike have expressed their appreciation of the work. A mobile road-aide clinic has been established, and orders have been given for the erection of three houses so as to demonstrate to the refugees what can be done with the building material placed at their disposal by the government. A sports club and a social club have also been started. The work, which is centred around Calcutta and Dandakaranya, may be divided into three sections: a social welfare programme, an economic reconstruction programme and a medical programme. So far the work has reached only the preliminary stage, but Rev. J. Kronn has outlined a number of problems to be tackled in various spheres, and stressed the aim of the relief as being "a help to self-help".

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Still Fewer Resignations from the Lutheran National Church.

Last year the number of people who resigned from the Lutheran National Church was reduced to half, while the number of new members went up. A similar trend could be noted in other bigger towns.

Statistics for the period from January 1st to August 31st, 1961, are now available and shows that this trend has been continued. In the period mentioned the number of people joining the National Church was greater than that of people resigning, viz. 612 against 486.

In giving these figures, the "Församlingsbladet" feels that this encouraging development must to a certain extent be connected with the fact that since 1960 the church taxes to the Lutheran National Church are collected simultaneously with the other taxes.

New Prophecy from Oulu (Uleåborg).

The prophecy from Oulu (Uleåborg) still excites the minds of many people in various places in Finland and a kind of revivalist movement has developed around it. As mentioned in CN Nos. 67, 68 and 69, it began with a young typist in Oulu who suddenly one day in August last year spoke in tongues and afterwards was able to translate her message into Finnish. It was later printed in great numbers and distributed all over the country under the heading "Finland Thy Salvation is in the Blood of My Son". It said here that unless 800,000 people in Finland had repented of their sins and become converted before September 1961, the country would suffer the fate of Estonia and Hungary. The nation would be driven out and other inhabitants settle in the country.

The prophecy has caused revivalist meetings in various places in Finland such as, for instance, at Jakobstad recently where 1,000 people attended the closing meeting of a campaign in which almost all the clergymen in the deanery had taken part. This has given rise to a lively discussion in the course of which many have dissociated themselves from the motive of fear contained in the revivalist drives, whereas others have stressed the biblical character of the prophecy.

A new prophecy from Oulu was published on September 15 th in which it says that the Finnish nation will be chastened, but not cast off, and that God will grant the people a new period of visitation from the beginning of October to the end of December. At the same time, the message emphasizes that the Bible is the word of God and should be taken absolutely literally from beginning to end.

Engineer Wins Contest in Bible Knowledge.

With the maximum number of points possible Mr. Antti Laine, Civil Engineer, Tampere (Tammerfors), has won the Finnish First Prize in the Bible knowledge competition conducted in a number of countries, the final contest of which is to take place in Israel on November 3rd. Mr. Laine is engaged in a factory on the planning of water turbines. His great interest in the Bible dates from his reading a devotional book for boys in his childhood days. Having become personally converted, he joined a Bible school. He has been a Sunday School teacher and the leader of a Bible study group; but he has also, it should be mentioned, won the First Prize in a competition on building model aeroplanes in 1944.

rther Training of Hospital Chaplains:

There are now 30 full-time hospital chaplains in the Lutheran ational Church of Finland. In preparation for their future work ney are given a 2 year course extending in all over 40 days and ivided into a number of periods of three or four days. The training ill be conducted by Rev. Niilo Syvänne, Rural Dean, and both psycho- ogists and psychiatrists will take part in the teaching.

ews in Brief:

The founder of the Settlement Movement in Finland, Dr. Sigfrid irenius, D.D., who from 1918-1936 was the leader of Kalliola, inland's first Settlement, has died, 84 years old.

In October Bishop Elis Gulin will leave for Australia where he is o visit the largest of the Finnish emigration centres before going o India in order to take part in the New Delhi Assembly. There re 8,000 Finnish emigrants in Australia.

In September a Northern conference on films about Foreign Missions ook place in Helsinki (Helsingfors). At the conference it was advo- ated that the Northern missionary organizations should co-operate bout this matter.

ICELAND

Iore Norwegian Gifts for the Cathedral of Skálholt.

The Cathedral of Skálholt, the old Icelandic see, has not yet been completed, but it is hoped that the dedication may take place and the Cathedral be taken into use in the summer of 1962. Gifts have been received from the other Northern countries, the latest ones being three carved oak chairs for the Presidential couple and the Bishop and two oak doors for the church from a merchant in Bergen (Norway).

10 Churches Dedicated or Re-Dedicated.

At the Icelandic clergymen's synod in Reykjavik recently, Bishop Sigurbjörn Einarsson said that in the past year 10 churches, either new or rebuilt, were dedicated or re-dedicated respectively.

NORWAY

New Bishop in Tunsberg.

Reverend Dagfinn Hauge was appointed bishop in the Diocese of Tunsberg by the King and the Government of Norway. The new bishop was born in 1908. From 1948 - 1953 he was the general secretary of the Norwegian Christian Youth Association. Since 1959 he has been the rector of Vestre Aker in Oslo.

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The Norwegian Church Ought to Resign from the World Council of hurches If ..."

In an editorial the weekly of the Norwegian Home Mission, For fattig og rig", advocates that the Norwegian Lutheran National hurch should resign from the World Council of Churches if the Russian rthodox Church is granted membership at New Delhi. The paper has o doubt that the Russian Church will be admitted to the Council and omewhat tartly remarks that "the World Council of Churches already ncompasses so many peculiar theological views that it must be easy o make room for still more".

The paper accuses the Russian Orthodox Church of having allowed itself to be bound by the powers in the Kremlin and of having taken the side of the oppressors. Either by their silence or by their defence, the leaders of the Church have made themselves a party to the events in Karelia, the Baltic States, Poland, Hungary and East Germany, the article says, and cites a statement by Bishop Berggrav: "In the Soviet Union there is a Church which has placed itself entirely at the service of the godless propaganda of the State. By our visits and by sharing in the fellowship of this Church we are on the verge of treachery".

The weekly of the Oslo Home Mission,"Vår Kirke", does not have the same view. Bishop Berggrav's statement was expressed in a particular situation and context, it says, and doubts the advisability of attaching general importance to it so many years later. "Vår Kirke" quotes many prominent churchmen in the West who, despite certain misgivings about accepting the Russian Church as a member, have nevertheless strongly recommended it, and the paper concludes:

"The desire to segregate oneself from those Christians who think and believe something else is not less dangerous than the difficulties which may arise from the contact with them".

Encouraging Change in Political Climate.

"The position of Christians in politics is much stronger now than before", Mr. Erling Wikborg, M.P., says on the occasion of his retirement from politics after having represented the Christian Liberal Party in Parliamnet since 1945. The statement may be found in an interview with the Christian daily paper in Oslo,"Vårt Land". Mr. Wikborg declares that in his opinion there has been a notable change in the political climate. In 1945 there were many who maintained that Christianity and Politics had nothing to do with each other, but since then the appeal for a constructive Christian contribution to the social structure has met with response far beyond the ranks of the Christian Liberal Party. Now the other Parties, and among them the Social Democratic Labour Party, also try to get confessed Christians nominated as candidates. This development Mr. Wikborg ascribes among other things, to the fact that with the passing of time people have been forced away from the materialistic attitude and outlook on life.

The Farming Project in Nigeria of the Norwegian Lutheran National Church.

Before the planting season in May 1962 five Norwegian agrarian experts and their families will have started work on the farm in Nigeria belonging to the Norwegian Church, the Chairman of the farm-

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ng project in Abakaliki said recently over the Norwegian Radio. A three-storied model farm, comprising a section for domestic animals, a planting section, and a technical section, will be erected shortly, and the first undertaking will be an attempt to teach the population how to grow rice, start a production of milk, and begin planting a forest. Several of the Norwegian wives are trained nurses and will teach the women the care of children, hygiene, and proper nutrition. In the Abakaliki district the mortality rate among children is 50 %.

A collection for funds for the project started in Nigeria by the Norwegian Lutheran National Church in aid of developing countries will be launched in November, the project being expected to cost 1/2 million Norwegian Crowns annually.

Proposal for Compulsary Civil Marriage.

At the research course for clergymen held in Oslo, Professor Johan B. Hygen, D.D., proposed the introduction of compulsory civil marriage, a proposal which he has later on further elaborated in a number of press articles. The reason is that Church weddings are legally valid in Norway and that many clergymen have conscientious objections to the re-marriage of divorced persons. Professor Hygen suggests that all marriages should be of a civil nature, but might take place before a minister in his capacity of a civil servant. The ceremony might be performed either in the vestry or in the office of the church and, if people so wished, be followed by a church function which would not be a wedding, but rather an address to and a prayer for the couple entering upon marriage.

The Christian daily paper in Oslo, "Vårt Land", is not satisfied with the proposal, feeling that the minister, in spite of acting as a civil servant, might still have objections of conscience in re-marrying divorced people, just as the paper feels that the public in general will not be able to discriminate between the two capacities of the minister.

Two Important Church Meetings in Oslo.

From October 31st to November 3rd the national meeting of the voluntary religious organizations will take place in Oslo and will be attended by representatives of the Diocesan Councils, the members of the Voluntary Church Council and all the Bishops. The main topic of lectures and deliberations will be the importance of the home in Church and society.

Likewise in Oslo, a special Kirchentag will take place from November 11th - 12th for clergymen, parochial councils, and the Christian organizations in the Capital at which the special problems facing the Church in regard to the growing population of suburban areas will be dealt with. The Kirchentag is being planned by the Dean, the Home Mission of Oslo, and the Small Churches Movement in Oslo jointly, and will be the first of its kind.

SWEDEN

piscopal Election in Visby.

At the episcopal election in Visby Dean Olle Herrlin, Uppsala, btained the highest number of votes, followed by Dean Gustaf Adolf anell, Växjö, and Rev. Ebbe Arvidsson, Sigtuna. All three candidates, mong whom the King and the Government may choose freely, are opposed o women ministers.

The Liberal daily paper, "Expressen", has intimated that Government may refuse to appoint a new bishop if none of the candidates are onsidered acceptable, and the paper believes that Government is hardly able to accept episcopal candidates who, by refusing to ordain omen, may set at defiance the resolutions of the Church Assembly and arliament.

The weekly paper, "Vår Kyrka", objects to this way of thinking, aintaining that it would constitute a violation of the rights of he Church. But the paper advocates amending the law so that laymen ay also have a say in the matter of the election of a bishop.

ntercommunion with the Church of Scotland.

The weekly paper issued by the Kyrklig Samling (the Confessional ront), the "Svensk Pastoraltidskrift", has once more expressed its opposition to an intercommunion between the Swedish Lutheran National hurch and the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. The reason is that rchbishop Gunnar Hultgren has accepted an invitation to take part n the ordinary Church synod of the Church of Scotland next year, nd that his visit is interpreted as "a gesture symbolizing the extent of the intercommunion agreed upon by the Swedish Church and the hurch of Scotland".

"Svensk Pastoraltidskrift" cannot accept that such an intercommunion has been established as maintained by the Swedish-Scottish hurch conference at Sigtuna in the spring (see CN No. 71). It is feared that the already existing fellowship with the Orthodox, the nglican, and the other Lutheran Churches may be endangered. The decisive differences in conception with regard to the episcopal office and the Eucharist are emphasized, and the article concludes:

"From the point of view of the Confessional Front the preliminary planning for intercommunion with the Church of Scotland must be met with a "non possumus": We cannot assent to such deliberations and such an act".

Baptist Church Contemplates Joining the World Council of Churches.

The Missionary Board of the Swedish Baptist Church has recently set up a committee which is to study the World Council of Churches and the attitude of the Baptists to it. In due time the findings of the committee will be submitted to the Board.

Rev. Joel Sörenson, Stockholm, who is known to be in favour of the Baptist Church becoming a member of the World Council of Churches, has been elected Chairman of the committee. In an interview with the Free Church Press Bureau a short while ago, Mr. Sörenson said that he felt it would be failing God to hold aloof from it.

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Ecumenical Church Conference Joining the World Council of Churches.

The Missionary Board of the Swedish Pentecost Church has recently set up a committee with in to study the World Council of Churches and the actuality of the Pentecostal to it. In due time the findings of the committee will be submitted to the Board.

Rev. Josef Ekbergson, Stockholm, who is known to be in favour of the Baptist Church becoming a member of the World Council of Churches, has been elected Chairman of the committee. In an interview with the Free Church Press Bureau a short while ago, Mr. Ekbergson said that it felt it would be foiling God to hold aloof from it.

Easter Message Folder to All Swedish Homes.

The Evangelical Alliance in Sweden has decided, just before Easter next year, to issue a small folder of a fundamental evangelical content to all the homes in Sweden. The distribution will be done in co-operation with the churches, and the folder will, besides a coupon on which one may order a Bible section free of charge, contain information about local church services.

At the annual meeting in Stockholm recently the Mission Leader, Mr. Knut Svensson, "Svenska Alliansmissionen", was elected new President of the Evangelical Alliance, representing 11 denominations and organizations.